

istry—have in some considerable degree removed this obscurity, but its mists still lower thick around. These causes have ever afforded a prolific field of argument and controversy in the profession. They have drawn from Medical men speculations and conclusions as various and numerous almost as the varied and diversified shades and differences of human life and human character. And notwithstanding all our admitted progress, it is questioned in high quarters, whether, in this particular feature of the profession, we are much wiser, if any, than our fathers. Without any disposition to undervalue the labours of modern observers and experimentalists in relation to the etiology of disease, may it not in all propriety be asked what do we really and absolutely know after all about the causes of disease? How many diseases have ever had their causes unequivocally and mathematically demonstrated? What complaint has had its cause laid open beyond all doubt and cavil to the knowledge and senses of man? Even when belief as to the etiology of disease may seem every way rational, and has fixed its firmest convictions upon the mind, who can say that some hidden and unthought of source of causation has not done the work instead of our own assigned reasons for it? We know the specific effects of ipecac on the stomach and of aloes on the rectum, but we are as ignorant of the cause of each acting so differently on the same canal, as we are of the nature of some complaints peculiar to each. But we must not cease to investigate the *effects*, and thus, as far as can be, to *infer* the cause. The inductive system of Bacon, the founder of modern progress, has been of inestimable service to Medicine, and to science and philosophy in general. It has turned men in early times from blind devotion to systems, “more destructive,” in the language of Bolingbroke, “to truth and real learning than the ravages of the Goths and Vandals;” and it was not until medical men emancipated themselves from their vassalage to false systems, that substituted captious disputations for the deductions of reason and experience, that Medicine was elevated from its ancient degradation to its wonted usefulness and dignity. But Medical Science still continues to maintain in a great degree its speculative character. Our progress in the causation and phenomena of disease is not sufficient to have it otherwise. With all our allegiance to the acknowledged system of inductive reasoning in Medicine, we